St. John's Lutheran School
Alumni News

Newsletter 21

The Principal's Perspective

A big thank you to our Board of Trustees, our Athletic Director, and all the volunteers who helped complete projects at school this summer. The Wi-Fi system for the entire school and daycare has been improved and we have much better coverage for students and staff. Other jobs that were completed to beautify the school were: leveling of baseball and softball fields, the replacement of lights in front of the daycare, the pouring of concrete to connect the junior high hallway to the pavilion, organized care of landscaping at the school, and the painting of the 300 hallway at school and Ms. Sara Shepherd's room. We are thankful to all the workers who have given of their time to see the jobs through to completion.

Before the school year even started, the staff was able to join together in fellowship during our August meetings and especially on August 8th, for the Day of Spiritual Renewal celebrated at Trinity Hoffman. All these individuals, in one capacity or many, helped to get our school in pristine shape for the start of the year. We were able to successfully prepare for the students even with the early start in August.

We welcome new families into our school along with all returning students. We have always recognized our Preschool and Kindergarten students but also welcome four new students. The list of students is as follows: Three-Year-old Preschool- Vivian Breier, Cooper Buch, Maddox Cory, Brynlee Durbin, Logan Gramenz, Cash Grohmann, Oliver Grohmann, Roman Kern, Kullen Liefer, Mason Salger, Attlee Thien, Sophia Uffelmann, and Crew Wilson. Four-Year-old Preschool- Chloe Conway, Kolton Florreich, Eve Guebert, Lillian Guebert, Brie Kern, Kiffin Kaiser, Harper Kennedy, Theodore Koerber, Nolan Liefer, Liam Mastrantuono, Waylon McLean, Riley Okunola, Magnus Payne, Lane Pollard, Rose Sachtleben, Hailey Schlueter, Clark Thein, Henry Veath, and Kolby Young. Kindergarten- Bennett Buch, Witten Cheek, Demi Grohmann, Colton Gulley, Caleb Huntley, Ben Langrehr, Everett Liefer, Karlyn Meier, Dawson Nichols, Charlotte Salger, Eliza Schrader, and Case Uffelmann. 2nd Grade- Piper Runge. 5th Grade- Penny Lynn. 7th Grade- Lane Cowell. 8th Grade- Allie Seiber. The breakdown by grade is as follows: PreK 3-13, PreK 4-19, K-12, 1st-8, 2nd-17, 3rd -13, 4th -21, 5th -13, 6th -22, 7th -23, and 8th -13. Our enrollment for PreK-8th is 174 and K-8 is 142. Our Daycare has 107 more students that are not included in our preschool number so we have a total of 281 students hearing the good news of Jesus Christ on a daily basis! We give thanks for all of our children and pray for God's blessings to be upon them throughout the year.

Staffing for our school looks different this year as Mr. Becker will teach 4th grade religion and a portion of 8th grade confirmation. Mrs. Sara Shepherd will join Mrs. Schnepel, Mrs. Whelan, Mr. Becker, Mrs. Sachtleben, and myself as we work together to best serve the junior high school students. We were blessed to fill all needed positions but look forward to any information that could help locate a teacher wanting to teach the fourth-grade level.



Pictured is Sara Shepherd. Sara graduated from St. John's in 2009 and returned to serve our school family in 2021. Sara is currently the school secretary and teaches 6th and 7th grade science.

On August 17, the congregation of St. John's Lutheran recognized workers for years of service to St. John's Lutheran Church and School and years of service to the Lutheran Church- Missouri Synod. The following people were given a certificate and gift certificate from the congregation presented by elder, Stuart Langrehr: Brittany Eichholz - 5 years of service to St. John's Lutheran Daycare, Kaleigh Reith - 5 years to St. John's Lutheran Daycare, Kristi Martel - 10 Years of Service to St. John's Lutheran Daycare, Cindy Nebel - 10 years of service to St. John's Lutheran School, Kellie Schields - 15 years of service to St. John's Lutheran Daycare, Betty Schmitz - 30 years of service to St. John's Lutheran School, Kristin Sachtleben -



5 years of service to the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, Nancy Whelan - 20 years of service to the Luthran Church Missouri Synod, Cindy Nebel - 25 Years of Service to the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, William Becker- 30 years of service to the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, Betty Schmitz - 35 years of service to the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, and Rachel Miller - 35 years of service to the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod.

In many ways, we as a staff, school, and church are looking forward to many of the staples of our school year. Grandparents and Special Guest Day was held on September 27. We enjoyed having guests from far and near to see God's awesome work at St. John's. Another event we enjoy every year is the Fall Festival with in-person dining and our costume parade as well as our carnival games on October 25. Christmas services and a full group musical will be some of our major winter and spring events. These traditions are all made possible by the energy and action of our staff and/or volunteers from the church and school. We are truly blessed!

After last year's successful quarterly service projects, we have made some adjustments and look to do new quarterly service projects by grade groups. A focus this year will be to include the students in the service portion. During the third quarter, our third through fifth grades will be assembling treat bags for the "first responders"; the junior high students plan to have game days at a local assisted living community; and our Kindergarten through second grade students plan to assemble summer snack packs for the "Royal Table" during the fourth quarter. The teachers have taken on this challenge and are working to show the students that we are blessed by God and therefore, should be a blessing to others. They are leading by example as they held a Benefit BBQ for a school family that has a member battling cancer.

All of these returning activities and new ideas will keep the teachers, staff, and students of St. John's busy throughout the 2024-2025 school year. So please keep us in your prayers and consider helping out by volunteering at the school in many available roles; to find out how, please contact the school office at office@stjohnsredbud.org or 618-282-3873.

May the Lord Bless and Strengthen You,
Justin Palm

Remembering Our Time With Pastor Nebel, From DCE, Bill Becker

July 31 was a tough day here at St. John's Lutheran. For the last 17 years, Mark Nebel had served as the Senior Pastor. My two children, Briana and Bryce Becker, were confirmed by Pastor Nebel here. Pastor Nebel graciously came to our home during the Covid pandemic in April 2020, as we could not gather as a congregation for Easter services. In November 2021, Pastor Nebel performed the Christian burial of my father, Boniface. Mark Nebel was not only my Pastor; he was a colleague, a Christian brother, and friend.

Pastor Nebel accepted a Call to teach at his alma mater, St. Paul's Lutheran High School in Concordia, Missouri. He met Cindy Muehler Nebel there when they attended St. Paul's. They went to Concordia River Forest for college. After graduating from Concordia River Forest, they were engaged and then married. After graduating from Concordia Seminary in St. Louis and Washington University, he was called to serve in Cottage Hills, IL. He then served at Trinity Hoyleton, IL, before coming here in July 2007. God blessed their marriage with five children. When the time came for each child's high school education, the Nebel children followed in their parents and other relatives' footsteps at St. Paul's. Mary, their oldest child, works for St. Paul's in the accounting and finance departments.

St. John's is in a position we have not been in for many years. We are being served by three pastors; Rev. Arthur Eichhorn and Rev. Mark Winkleman during our senior pastor vacancy and by our associate pastor, Rev. Brian Nowak. Our elders are tasked with working with our circuit visitor, Pastor Scott Hojnacki, and the Southern Illinois District President, Timothy Scharr in preparing a Call list. Throughout the Call process, your prayers for our new undershepherd are sought. God has the right servant in mind to continue our faithful ministry of Word and Sacraments to his flock here at St. John's.

During this vacancy/transition period, St. John's faculty and staff are working together to fulfill God's tasks at St. John's. Thanks be to God for His gifts to His people and faithful followers.

Bill Becker, Director of Christian Education



Class of 2024 touring Concordia Seminary with Pastor Nebel and Bill Becker.

Save the date!
March 15, 2025
Dinner Auction
Let the
Games Begin!

A Visit With St. John's Confirmand: Dale Holmstrom

Regarding His Father, Gerald Holmstrom, a Beloved and Dedicated Member of St. John's

Dad was born on October 1, 1935, in Breckenridge, Minnesota, to Lenora and Ed Holmstrom. It was in the middle of the Great Depression, and those mean times hit the family hard. Dad would live in Fargo, North Dakota, then my grandparents would move and rent a house outside of Brandon, South Dakota.

He was the second of ten children. Growing up, he and his older brother Marvin (Marv) were very close and remain so for all of their lives. They were expected to help out the family once they could basically walk. Dad and Marv caught bullheads out of the nearby Big Sioux River, hunted pheasants, hares, and basically anything that moved to help feed the growing family. There was a big blizzard one winter when Dad was around 10 years old. There wasn't much to eat, and he had only one bullet for his .22 rifle, but he went out in that blizzard anyway. By God's providence, he spotted a large hare on a snow dune and took it down. Telling me this story, Dad would chuckle that the meat was stringy, but it fed the family.



Grandma, Grandpa, and younger siblings. Dad is on the far right next to Uncle Marv.

Children from poor families worked as well during those days. Dad, Uncle Marv, and my grandpa would shovel the coal out of train cars, often in the dead of winter. It was so cold that the sweat would freeze to their backs. He collected bounties for gophers with his .22 going to and from a one room schoolhouse. They also worked one very hot summer in North Dakota shocking wheat and hoeing fields. There was no air conditioning, and they slept in the stifling attic of a relative's farmhouse. Their reward was a pair of new clothes, some cash, and an old Ford Model A. There wasn't such a thing as a driver's license then, and Dad and Uncle Marv drove the car back to South Dakota. I think they were 13 or 14 years old at the time.

It wasn't all a hardscrabble life. Some time while growing up, he learned to swim and dive. He especially liked diving, and into his 30's could perform a 11/2 somersault with ease. Dad also loved movies. This began when his mom or aunt would take him into town to buy groceries and drop him off at the matinee. In his later years, one of the major reasons he liked his smart phone was that he could Google information about movie stars, while he was watching an old film.

He was raised a Lutheran and was confirmed at a small rural Missouri Synod church. His confirmand class picture is still in an album at that church. He also displayed a talent for mathematics. My grandmother dubbed him "The Professor". Dad said he could "see" equations. In high school, his math teachers came to him to solve calculus problems. He enjoyed math so much that his first job out of college was as a high school math teacher, and when he retired from Federal Service, he subbed for a math teacher at Chester High School.

Dad graduated from Washington High School in Sioux Falls in 1954. The path he chose after high school would alter his life drastically, and ultimately, bring he and his family to the beautiful little town called Red Bud.

He got a job as a laborer pouring concrete right out of high school. Knowing he was most likely going to be drafted, Dad went with three of his friends and enlisted in the Army. He was sent to Fort Leonard Wood for basic training. It was the hottest summer on record, and he saw many of his fellow recruits get heat stroke, some even died, but the naive farm kid had grown accustomed to the heat. Graduating from basic training, he volunteered for the airborne, the sole reason according to Dad, was that paratroopers received an extra fifteen dollars a month for jump pay.



He was sent to Beppu, Japan, *(pictured at right)* with the 508th Regimental Combat Team as part of the last occupational force there. His job was a clerk, for the sole rationale he had taken one typing class in high school. He participated in all the jumps his unit made and came to enjoy jumping out of a perfectly good plane. On his last jump, his regiment jumped during snowfall. Upon landing, he badly fractured his ankle but walked the eleven miles in the snow with the other paratroopers back to base.

The ankle surgery required extracting a piece of bone from his ankle. Groggy from anesthesia, he dreamed he heard Hank Williams singing. He awoke in the hospital ward to see a Japanese musical trio, dressed in cowboy outfits singing country songs!

The conditions in Japan were not conducive for healing, and he was sent back to Fort Campbell to recover. Six months passed before the injury was completely healed, but the Army decided upon an early honorable discharge. Dad returned to Sioux Falls and worked at John Morrell Meat Packing plant that, at the time, was the largest employer in the area (almost all of my aunts and uncles worked there at some stage of their lives).

One of his fellow Army friends told him he could go to college via the GI Bill, and Dad quickly enrolled at Minot State Teacher's College (now Minot State University). Most of the men there were veterans, and Dad joined Tau Kappa Epsilon Fraternity. He worked as a bellhop to make ends meet.

His favorite hangout was the American Legion Hall. One evening, he and two of his friends were discussing about going on an adventure like no other: one that would take them all the way to Patagonia. The talk must have gathered attention, for the next day the news that the three students were going to drive motorcycles from North Dakota to the southern tip of South America had spread like wildfire. (Dad donated a copy of the combined diaries of he and his friend of this motorcycle trip to the Red Bud Public Library if you would like to read his experiences.)

They made it to the Panama Canal, but ran out of money. Dad returned to college. He had been involved with a new skydiving club prior to their trip. His club would put on skydiving shows at county fairs and events throughout South Dakota. This was during the early days of skydiving as a sport. Dad and the others had to modify WW II Army surplus chutes and harnesses, so they were more accurate at landing on target. He would continue to jump until the early 1970's. If memory serves, he made 138 jumps.

Bored and alone teaching high school math in a small western South Dakota town, he applied and was accepted for civil service. He moved to the St. Louis area in the early 1960's and worked at the Defense Mapping Agency. It was top secret work. Later, Dad related he had drawn maps of former Soviet Union missile sites, Vietnam, and the Moon. This was all done via hand and calculated by slide rule (an analog precursor to the calculator). The family still has the slide rule.



Once again, the Lord blessed him in that he found love. Dad met a dark-haired beauty at a party in Spanish Lake, Missouri. Her name was Nancy Susan LeMasters. They were married on June 20, 1964 *(pictured at left)*. I entered this world a little after that.



Before I was born, he began to have a passion for oil painting. He started with still life paintings of flowers but quickly moved on to portraits *(Example of portrait pictured at right)*. He loved the act of giving, and much of his art was given to family and friends. A fond memory is smelling turpentine and paint, seeing Dad intently pondering over his newest painting in process.

We moved around some during his early days with the government. He transferred to computer programming when I was an infant. This was a very new technology at the time. Dad excelled at it, and he was involved with an early Army prototype of the internet. He also programmed many logistical programs for the Army, some were used until the 2000's.

We lived in West Germany in the early 1970's. Mom and Dad had bought property outside of Red Bud in 1969. We returned to the States in August 1974, and they built a home on the property in 1975. His journey was complete: he had found St. John's Lutheran in Red Bud to worship God, property, a loving wife, children, and a community he loved. He devoted himself to the church; serving as Usher, Chairman, Elder, and Men's Club. He was a gregarious man and made many friends. As Chairman, he enjoyed preparing and giving speeches for retirements and other events.

Dad loved hunting and fishing. He ardently believed it was a vital part of a man's upbringing as all aspects of the sport reveal the true meaning of nature. Before I was out of diapers, he brought me along fishing. He made sure his sons knew about part of his young life by going on pheasant hunting and fishing trips to South Dakota. We'd often stay at Uncle Marv's lakeside cabin enjoying the company of my other uncles and cousins.



Pictured left to right: son, Robert; grandson, Jacob; son Gerald II; Dad, and son, Dale.

As an adult, Dad became my friend; as best a relationship between father and son could be. We spent many days in the shade of the back porch discussing various issues. He was a passionate man; strongly upholding to what he believed but also a compassionate and caring one. He didn't get upset about much, even when my brothers and I got into trouble. He thought about an issue before speaking, something most of us could take advice from.

From my earliest memories, Dad kept in shape by jogging and outdoor activities. He started running after service and wore his jump boots to run all the way into the 1970's. Many in the community knew him as the "Ames Road Jogger." Two weeks before his passing, he was still jogging. He also was an avid Bridge card player. This community had its influence as we all began playing the unofficial card game of Red Bud: Euchre.

He passed fairly quickly from undiagnosed stomach cancer. In the early hours of May 12, 2023, the attending physician and I knelt by his side; praying and weeping (the doctor knew Dad from a previous injury where they had struck up a conversation about skydiving while he patched him up). The doctor then left, and I remained with him. I quickly found and read Psalm 23:2. After I finished reading, he took a few last breaths and found peace with our Lord.



1979 Confirmation Class: Left to Right, 1st Row: Christian Guebert, Michael Winkelmann. 2nd Row: Timothy Schrader, Deborah Wagner, Kevin Miller, Douglas Luttman. 3rd Row: Donna Gibson, Rhonda Schliefer, William Hemmer, Della Koester, James Schneider, Mr. Ron Snyder. 4th Row: Darrin Miller, Susan Liefer, Eric Hartmann, Rachel Snyder. 5th Row: Rev. Robert Holstein, Robert Holstein, Cheryl Bievenue, Dale Holmstrom, Kevin Graper, Vicar Paul Schunemann.

A Visit With Alumna: Bev (Zschiegner) Gruenwald

Great teachers inspire others to teach!

During my years at St. John's, I was so very blessed to have great teachers that inspired me to become a teacher and helped build a foundation for my future years of ministry.

Mrs. Kuring, not only gave 1st graders the base of phonics, but she also taught us the skills to read from the Bible and memorize the 23rd Psalm.

Mr. Tedding, 2nd grade, was kind and gentle and regarded us each as God's special children.

Miss Guebert (Mrs. Eunice Wiatr) 3rd grade, showed us that even a young woman could love the Lord and dedicate her life to teaching.

Mr. Werning, 4th and 6th grades, was the first teacher in my memory to really live the joy of Jesus. He happily taught us music, including demonstrating high standards in choir, and we all enjoyed the chapter books he read to us after lunch each day.

Mr. Rhiver, 5th grade, showed how learning could be fun. I also remember him leading VBS music and getting us excited about praising God in song.

Mrs. Stellhorn, 7th grade, was an extremely gifted teacher and she taught me more about organization in writing and reading than anyone else. She also related God's presence to what was happening in the world as she pointed to current events and said, "Pay attention to this. This is history!"

Mr. Snyder, 8th grade, showed strength in leadership and faithfully ended each day loudly playing and singing "Lord, dismiss us with Thy blessing." I'm sure his students all these years later can still recite (and hopefully keep in their hearts) "…fill our hearts with joy and peace. Let us each Thy love possessing, triumph in redeeming grace."

Mrs. Lisa Kloepper, and the Sunday School and VBS leaders, were inspirational to me as some of the first ones to tell me Bible Stories and teach me songs that I still cherish today. They also allowed me to volunteer with young children as the Holy Spirit was beginning to lead me into a future of teaching.

Mr. Larry Grass and Mrs. Joyce (Simmons) Carnahan provided rich experiences in Youth Group for Christian fun and additional spiritual growth. The years of Youth Group were the best! Great friendships were formed as we enjoyed local events, circuit activities, and even attended the first LCMS Youth Gathering in Fort Collins, Colorado. I didn't realize that the opportunities I was given to lead devotions and help organize events would greatly shape my leadership



Youth Group, District retreat in Carlinville: Back: Lyle Junge, Bruce Schneider. Middle: James Snyder, Danette (Sachtleben) Miller, Jane (Prigge) Powell, Todd Wagner. Front: Joyce Carnahan, Bev, Laurie (Muench) Gower, Nancy (Ehlers) Rinda.



Greg and Kellie (Gruenwald) Wanko with Mabel, Ralph, and Joanie, Steve and Bev, Philip and Christine Gruenwald, Carl and Flo.

in full-time ministry.

St. John's continued to support my growth in becoming a church worker, by offering annual gifts from the Guebert Fund as I attended Concordia River Forest (Concordia University Chicago).

Through church leaders and the congregation, I learned that Jesus is my Savior from all sin and my Guide through this earthly life. My uncle, Rev. Max Zschiegner, baptized me in 1962 when he was home on furlough from Japan. I was confirmed by Pastor Holstein in 1976, and was married by Pastor Donald Schultz in 1984.

Forty years ago, I graduated from Concordia (majoring in early childhood and elementary education) and married my dear friend, Steve Gruenwald. Our first Calls were to Mt. Clemens, Michigan, where I served as 1st grade teacher and Youth Director at Immanuel until we were blessed with our two children, Kellie and Philip. Steve then took a Call to Lutheran North HS in St. Louis where he continued to teach English, speech, and drama.



1976 Confirmation Class: Left to Right, 1st Row: Kathleen Voges, Thuy Tran, Delonda Mesnarich, Sharon Birkner, Cindy Menke, Holly Gossett, Cynthia Spradling. 2nd Row: Rev. Robert Holstein, Roger Williams, Beverly Zschiegner, Nancy Ehlers, Marsha Jacobs, Susan Guebert, Steven Burgdorf, Brian Guebert, James Snyder, Daniel Liefer, Mr. Ron Snyder. 3rd Row: Kenneth Walton, Cynthia Voss, Lynn Seymour, Sandra Deterding, Laurie Muench, Mark Scheffert, Bonnie Schliefer, Bruce Schneider, Brent Moeller, Todd Wagner, Dale Schmitz.

In St. Louis, I served as the Early Childhood Director at Grace Chapel, Bellefontaine Neighbors, Abiding Savior in South County, and most currently at St. Paul's, Des Peres. After 12 years teaching, Steve continued to serve the LCMS for 28 years as Director of Worker Wellness for Concordia Plans.

Besides the great influence of St. John's, my parents were the strongest role models of Christian service. Carl and Flo Zschiegner were Youth counselors for many years, and they involved my brother, Doug, and I as they modeled the joy of volunteering in the church. Dad continued to serve in other areas including Chairman of the congregation for three terms while caring for "his people" through AAL. Mom loved her involvement with quilting, LWML, Evening Guild, and quietly baked pies and casseroles for countless families in time of need. She even took me with her to Evangelism classes when I was in high school. We enjoyed family sing-alongs in the car with their old Walther League songbooks and so many silly family nights and vacations together.



Doug Zschiegner with Carl and Flo, enjoying Wurstmarkt carryout.

My parents, Carl and Flo, continue to live in Red Bud, now at Garden Place. Doug has spent most of his career acting, directing, and teaching theatre. He recently moved near San Diego, California, but makes weekly calls and regular visits to family "back home".

Steve and I retired from full-time ministry in August of this year, and we are happy to see where else the Lord may lead us. Our children are both married and live in St. Louis so we can see each other frequently. We are blessed with 3 grandchildren (ages 2, 3, and 4 months).

I thank the Alumni News for allowing me to share a few memories of my years at St. John's. Not everyone who attends St. John's is called into full-time ministry, but everyone can grow from the seeds of faith that are planted to become strong Christian parents, volunteers, and "Gospel lights" in any area of life. As one of the very first songs I learned as a child so boldly says, may we all live our lives to proclaim, "I'm going to let it shine!"

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